

Fasting is For Me!

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FASTING IS FOR ME!

The Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said that Allah said:

كُلُّ عَمَلِ ابْنِ آدَمَ لَهُ ، إِلَّا الصَّوْمَ فَإِنَّهُ لِي ، وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ

Every good deed of the sons of Adam is for them except fasting, it is for Me and I shall reward the fasting person for it.

The Hadith is in Sahih al-Bukhari and the Hadith is a Hadith Qudsi. Ahaadith al-Qudsiyyah (أحاديث القدسية) are the ones that are revealed to the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam but they are the words of Allah. The difference between them and the Qur'an is that you cannot recite them in Salah and they get a general reward, not the specific reward of the Qur'an where you get ten Hasanaat per letter. And also they get scrutinised like other Ahaadith, so some are accepted and some are rejected. You do not accept automatically a Hadith Qudsi just because it is a Hadith Qudsi, the 'Ulamaa of Hadith tell you which is authentic and which is not.

WHY DID ALLAH SAY FASTING IS FOR ME?

In this Hadith, Allah said every good deed of the son of Adam is for him except fasting, it is for Me and I shall reward the fasting person for it. All the deeds are for Allah, we know that. That is an established fact but why did He specify fasting here, fasting is for Me? That is the point of our talk today. Fasting is for Me, Allah said that. You may think it is a simple issue but Ahmad Ibn Isma'eel al-Qazweeni in his book Hadhaa'ir Al-Quds (حظائر القدس)

mentioned fifty five scholarly opinions as to this matter, Ibn Hajr mentioned ten. In these few moments, we will discuss some of the popular opinions so we can achieve our goal of understanding the Hadith and understanding fasting better.

THERE IS NO RIYAA' IN FASTING

Every good deed of the sons of Adam is for him except fasting, it is for Me. That is our point, I reiterate that is our point. Al-Maaziri, al-Qurtubi, Ibn al-Jawzi and others said that fasting was specified in this Hadith and Allah attributed it to Himself because fasting has no Riyaa'. It has no eye service, no hypocrisy, no dissimulation, it has no showing off in it. Fasting is a special worship between you and Allah, there is no show off in it unless you speak about it, unlike other matters of worship. If you give charity, if you lecture, if you offer Salah, if you

perform Hajj, if you are dutiful to your parents, if you are good to your neighbours, and other matters of worship, they are apparent and there may be a show off aspect in them because people see them. The act itself can be for show and one at times needs to struggle with himself to purify his intention, to eliminate the show off aspect of these worships.

In fasting, it is different. A man fasting to show off while his stomach is full, a fake, looks and appears to the public like one who is sincerely fasting for the sake of Allah, a genuine Muslim. Both appear to the public as not eating, they do not eat, no one knows the reality of the matter but Allah. One can be fasting a Nafil, a Sunnah, a non obligatory outside Ramadhaan and no one knows that but Allah, and one can break his obligatory fast in Ramadhaan and no one knows about it but Allah. Fasting in itself is a silent and private Ibaadah no one knows about unless you speak about it.

Let me make it clear in an example, a story that I once read. There was a line at a meat market once and a man from back of the line told the butcher, he said hurry up, I have to get home and cook the meat before Maghrib because I am fasting today. So an unwise man behind him who was possibly worse than him told him, he said you want him to rush and you are only fasting one day, I have been fasting three days and I wait in line all day long and I have not asked him. The point of that is Allah covered the matter, no one would have known that. Had both of them not spoken, no one would have known about it. It is a matter only Allah knows, so that is one of the scholarly explanations of this Hadith, that fasting is for Me and I shall reward for it.

There is a weak saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam that there is no show off in fasting.

الصَّيَّامُ لَا رِيَاءَ فِيهِ

It is weak and it cannot be used. However, had it been authentic, it would have been a decisive matter in the interpretation of this Hadith. So this first opinion, and you learn from every one of these opinions, is that unlike other matters, fasting is a worship that does not have a show off aspect to it, it is very unique and special in that matter.

FASTING IS AMONG THE MOST BELOVED IBAADAAT TO ALLAH

The second opinion of why Allah chose fasting to attribute it to Himself over other Ibaadaat, is because fasting is among the most beloved worships to Allah. Salah is among the most beloved type of worships to Allah. In an authentic Hadith, Ahmad Shaakir said it is an authentic Hadith:

خَيْرَ أَعْمَالِكُمُ الصَّلَاةَ

The best of your deeds is Salah. But so is fasting because in another Hadith, the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said:

عليك بالصيام فإنه لا عدل له

The Prophet told a man to fast because there is no equivalent to fasting.

Fasting is considered among the best of all Ibaadaat because it raises fear of Allah in one's self. Fasting is unique in that it livens and deepens the love and fear of Allah. Fasting embeds fear of Allah in your heart because Allah said about fasting, it is to establish Taqwa:

...لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿البقرة: ١٨٣﴾

That you may become Al-Muttaqoon (the pious). (Surat al-Baqarah: 183)

In the verses about fasting. Awareness that Allah sees and hears you, and knows of you constantly. You have to be on alert constantly knowing that Allah is watching you, that is why you do not go near your wife, that is why you do not go near the fridge. So the first opinion is that there is an aspect of sincerity in fasting and lack of show off in fasting. The second opinion is that it is among the most beloved Ibaadaat to Allah.

NO ONE KNOWS THE REWARD OF FASTING BUT ALLAH

The third opinion as to why Allah said fasting is for Me, is because no one knows the reward of fasting but Allah, and this is also the second sentence of the Hadith. All deeds have a specified amount of reward, except fasting. In Sahih Muslim, the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said every deed has ten to seven hundred folds except fasting, it is for Allah. No one knows or calculates fasting but Allah. No one knows the specific reward of fasting but Allah. No one calculates the multiple folds on top of the regular reward, but Allah subhaanahu wa ta'aala.

You can see possibly in the Hadith that I mentioned where one gets ten to seven hundred folds of reward in all deeds except fasting, meaning that Inshaa Allah fasting is even way more than seven hundred. Wallahi, one who contemplates and thinks about that fully, will make most of his life a Ramadhaan. When a king or prominent person or an employer on this earth gives a gift, he gives it in such generosity to suit the position he is in. So imagine the King of all kings when He says fasting, I got you on that reward.

FASTING REQUIRES ALL THREE TYPES OF PATIENCE

The fourth reason why Allah said fasting is for Me, patience is three types, fasting requires all three types of patience. There is patience in obedience to Allah, there is patience in

refraining from Haraam and there is patience in Qadhaa' and Qadar (decree and destiny). Unlike many matters of Ibaadah and worldly matters where one type of patience is needed, in fasting you need all three of them.

Number one, you need patience in refraining from Haraam. How does it pertain to fasting? You have to refrain from food, you have to refrain from drinking, you have to refrain from relationship with your wife. Food, drink and relationship with your wife is Haraam during the day of Ramadhaan, so one needs to be patient in that. One needs to be patient in refraining from other Haraam like backbiting, speaking ill, speaking evil and lying. Those that are Haraam on regular days, but more so on days that one is fasting in them. It takes a lot of patience for one on a night of Ramadhaan where there is a gathering that consists of nothing but slander and backbiting, to stand up and walk away.

In fasting, you also need patience in doing the ordains, the second type of patience. One needs patience to fast in obedience to Allah, especially when the Nafs (one's self inclination) may at times dislike fasting due to its hardship. He uses patience to fast, to resist that Nafs, that self inclination.

...النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةً بِالسُّوءِ... ﴿يُوسُفُ: ٥٣﴾

The (human) self is inclined to evil. (Surat Yusuf: 53)

One disliking fasting because it is from Allah, that is totally different. The deeds of that person vanish and he needs to take his Shahaadah again. But there are matters like fasting that are heavy on one's self and he needs patience to endure them.

And the third type of patience is patience in decree and destiny, and you need that in fasting. Allah decreed hot days, you have to fast in them, you accept the decree of Allah. Sometimes you have to go to work, sometimes you become lazy or bored or thirsty, yet you accept the decree of Allah and you fast. You go through that because you know Allah decreed that for you. Allah decreed that hot day, Allah decreed that you are not going to be as energetic on that day at work, so you accept that decree. When fasting contains all three types of patience, you need all three types of patience, the reward is supreme. So that is why Allah attributed fasting to Himself and to give the amount that He said:

وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ

I am the One who is going to give that reward for that matter.

ALLAH HONOURS FASTING BY ATTRIBUTING IT TO HIMSELF

A fifth reason some of the 'Ulamaa mention as to why Allah said fasting is for Me, they said it is because Allah honours fasting with that. You know how you say Baytullah (the house of Allah), you honour the house of Allah. When you say the she-camel of Allah:

... نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا ﴿الشَّمْسُ: ١٣﴾

“[Do not harm] the she-camel of Allah or [prevent her from] her drink.” (Surat ash-Shams: 13)

As in the Qur'an many times, you honour the camel by saying that. The rule of Usool in specialising a matter that is otherwise general, means to honour it. We know the Masaajid are Masaajid but when Allah says Baytullah, it is to honour it. When you say Naaqatallah (the camel of Allah), it is to honour it. Zakah, fasting, Salah, all that are worships of Allah, but when it is specialised and when Allah says fasting is for Me, it is to honour that.

Fasting is great and it is supreme. Why? Because it pins down your inclination and desire for the sake of Allah, that is what fasting is about. His wife behind closed doors, he does not touch her. He returns from work on a hot day away from the refrigerator and from food, because he fears Allah. So that requires a lot of reward, and Allah honoured it for that. It cannot be any type of normal reward, so Allah honoured it by saying fasting is for Me and I shall reward for it. This by itself is sufficient honour, grace and merit for those wise to know the value of fasting, in knowing that Allah attributed it to Himself and attributed the reward that He is the only One who is going to give it.

FASTING CANNOT BE TAKEN FROM ON THE JUDGMENT DAY

Finally, a sixth opinion that 'Ulamaa mentioned why Allah attributed fasting to Himself is because on the Judgment Day people who wronged one another, one can take from their deeds. If I got wronged from someone, I take from their deeds on the Judgment Day. Any and all deeds except fasting can be taken from on Judgment Day, this is the opinion of Sufyaan Ibn 'Uyaynah.

Before one passes on to the front yard of Jannah, after he passes as-Siraat there are some who have to go to al-Qantarah to settle the score and it is not a money score that they settle, it would be easy if it was money but it is deeds. They have to go on a bridge and they settle it with deeds. If I wronged someone, they take from my deeds. If they wronged me, I take from their deeds. May Allah guard us and save us from that. You have Salah, you have Zakah, you have Hajj, you have Umrah, you have charity, people can take from all that and if all that vanishes, the person who was wronged gets sins taken off of him and they are placed on one who wronged him, except fasting. This is the opinion of Sufyaan Ibn 'Uyaynah, he said fasting is untouched because Allah said fasting is for Me.

THE MUSHRIKEEN DID NOT COMMIT SHIRK IN FASTING

The final opinion we will mention for today is some of the 'Ulamaa said fasting is for Me, Allah specialised it for Himself because the Mushrikeen did not commit Shirk in fasting. It was always only for Allah. What we mean by that is you heard of Mushrikeen who sacrificed for their statues, they gave pledges and oaths for their statues, they prayed in Rukoo' and Sujood for their statues, they feared them and had hope in them, unlike fasting where we never heard of the Mushrikeen fasting for their statues. So the meaning here is that Shirk did not enter in the worship of fasting.

ALLAH IS SHOWING US THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING

Finally, Allah attributed fasting and its reward to Himself to show the importance of fasting, to put your hearts and minds into it, to take this matter of worship seriously. Your days of fasting should not be like any other day, especially in Ramadhaan. Siyaam is purification, it is a university of Taqwa. It is manners, it is a school you need to value. Imagine the reward, your mother and your father will not be able to help you on that Day, but fasting comes to you on that Day to help you and rescue you. If Muslims realised this virtue of fasting and how Allah honoured it when He attributed it to Himself and how much reward comes out of it, if we understood the value, we would go down in Sujood to Allah thanking Him for making fasting obligatory in this month.